Economic Justice Through a Reconstructionist Lens

Text used or cited in this discussion

Biblical and Talmudic Texts

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the LORD am your God."

Leviticus 19:9-10

"Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous."

Deuteronomy 16:19

"Your rulers are traitors and partners with thieves. They are all in love with bribes and they chase after gifts. They do not judge the cases of orphans, the widow's cause never comes before them."

Isaiah 1:23

"In your [land] are those who take bribes to shed blood."

Ezekiel 22:12

"Through justice is a nation established, but through gifts it is destroyed."

Proverbs 29:4

“Even one who is righteous in every respect and takes bribes will not depart from this world without [the affliction of] confusion of mind.”

Ketubot 105b

"Whoever takes bribes brings great wrath into the world."

Bava Batra 9b

Other Sources

“I believe in the division of labor. You send us to Congress; we pass laws under which you make money. And, out of your profits, you further contribute to our campaign funds to send us back again to pass more laws to enable you to make more money.”

Boises Penrose

“The system does produce corruption. Implicit in the system is corruption. When in fact, whether or not you can run for public office, it costs a great deal of money to run for the United States Senate even from a small state like Delaware, you have to go to those people who have money, and they always want something... I think it’s the most degrading experience in the world to have to go out and ask for money, because unless you accidentally agree with the position taken by the person or group that has the money, you run the risk of deciding whether or not you’re going to prostitute yourself to give the answer you know they want to hear in order to get funded to run for that office. And it’s coincidental in many instances when you “happen to agree” with where they are. And you run the risk, by the way, of rationalizing it.”

President Joe Biden in 1974

Further Readings

Articles

- "Labor Lens Investing: The Business Case for Fair Labor Practices" (Authored by Mark Pinsky)
- The Case for Reparations" by Ta-Nehisi Coates, The Atlantic, June 2014
- "The Stolen Beam Series: A Study of Reparations for Descendants of Enslaved Americans in the U.S. (A Manual for Facilitators)," Jewish Community of Amherst
- *Organized Money: How Progressives Can Leverage the Financial System to Work for Them, Not Against Them.* The New Press, 2019. Mestrich, Keith & Mark A. Pinsky
- "The Jewish Basis for Shareholder Activism"- Mordechai Liebling, The Reconstructionist, Volume 69, Number 2, Spring 2005
- Jews, Money and Social Responsibility- Jeffrey Dekro and Lawrence Bush

Organizations

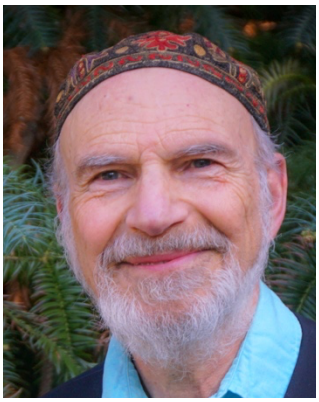
- CDFI Friendly America
- B Corporations
- Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility
- Social Investment Forum
- Honor the Earth

Land Grant Colleges & Universities and Reparations

- The Original Sin Of Our Nation's First Public Universities
- Land-grant universities should acknowledge their debt to Indigenous people

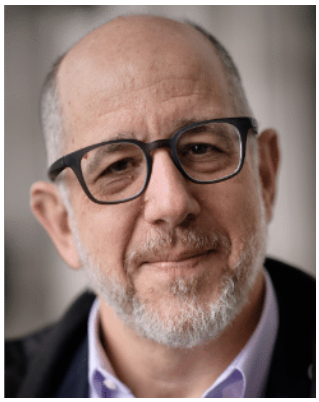
Speakers Bios

Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, Interim Director of Organizing for POWER Interfaith



Rabbi Mordechai Liebling is the Interim Director of Organizing for POWER Interfaith. He founded and directed the Social Justice Organizing Program at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College from which he was ordained. Prior to that, he was the Executive Vice-President of Jewish Funds for Justice (now Bend the Arc) and the Torah of Money Director at The Shefa Fund. Earlier he was the Executive Director of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation. He serves on the boards of the Shalom Center, Faith in Action, and the Faith and Politics Institute.

Mark A. Pinsky, Founding Partner at CDFI Friendly America



Mark A. Pinsky is a member Reconstructing Judaism's Board where he serves as Board Treasurer. He is a member of Minyan Dorshei Derekh in Philadelphia. He sits on the Investment Committee and the COVID Committee at Germantown Jewish Centre, which houses Dorshei Derekh.

He is President of Five/Four Advisors, a strategic consulting firm based in Philadelphia that works with community development financial institutions (CDFIs), community land trusts, socially responsible investors, impact investors, and others. Since the 1980s he has been a leading national community development finance practitioner, and he has served in multiple leadership positions in the financial services industry

He is the founding Partner of CDFI Friendly America, a transformational strategy to deliver patient, affordable financing to thousands of under-resourced communities and millions of people across the nation.

In 2019, he co-authored *Organized Money: How Progressives Can Leverage the Financial System to Work For them, Not Against Them* (The New Press).

Rabbi Michael Pollack, Executive Director at March on Harrisburg

Rabbi Michael Pollack grew up in Rockville, Maryland. During his last year of rabbinical school, he co-founded March on Harrisburg, a group dedicated to healing our wounded democracy and restoring trust to the republic by passing anti-corruption, pro-democracy bills in Pennsylvania. March on Harrisburg lobbies, marches, and does nonviolent civil disobedience to move their bills and build an honest and productive relationship between citizen and state. Michael's hobbies include convincing politicians to not be corrupt, long marches through the Pennsylvania countryside, and sitting down in inconvenient places in the State Capitol.